AI Overview

May Day celebrations at US girls' schools and women's colleges blossomed from the 1870s through the 1950s as a wholesome,,19th-century "a-maying" tradition brought from Britain to symbolize femininity, spring, and community. Festivities typically included crowning a May Queen, dancing around a maypole, and class plays, popular in both secondary schools and colleges. National Museum of American History +3

Historical Evolution and Traditions

- **Origin:** Resurging in the 1870s, wealthy reformers and educators introduced the traditions, turning May Day into a staple of school calendars, especially at women's colleges, to promote fitness and wholesome recreation.
- **Key Rituals:** The celebrations focused on,19th-century "a-maying" traditions including selecting a May Queen and her court, decorating a maypole with ribbons, and dancing.
- **Schools and Colleges:** Prominent institutions including Wilson College, Madison College (now JMU), and the Annie Wright Schools, as well as many all-girls high schools, held annual May Fetes or festivals.
- **Activities:** Events featured pageantry,,pageantry, class plays, Scottish dancing, and musical displays, which often served as a "coming out" ceremony for the senior class. National Museum of American History +6

Decline and Legacy

- **Popularity Decline:** Interest waned in the 1960s and 1970s, as May Day celebrations were sometimes seen as old-fashioned, competitive, or simply,lost their place amidst a shift away from communal, in-person childhood games,.
- **Transition:** Many schools replaced the formal May Day with "Spring Fling" festivals or combined it with other campus celebrations, though some institutions continued the tradition as a nostalgic rite of spring. The Old Farmer's Almanac +2

Key Historical Examples

- **Emma Willard School:** Historically, The Emma Willard School saw dramatic entrances for their May Queen, ranging from carriages to,8, helicopter rides, settling into a "senior triangle" tradition.
- **Wilson College:** The Wilson College celebration featured a May Queen with twenty attendants, transitioning to a day of booths and,2, dances, later called "Spring Fling".
- **JMU (Madison College):** May Day was a major event on "Maypole Hill," which ceased in 1971,.